

ODHH Monthly Bulletin

May 2012

A message from Director Lisa Kornberg

Older Americans Month is celebrated each May to honor and recognize older Americans for the contributions they make to our families, communities and society. This year's theme "Never Too Old to Play" encourages older Americans to stay engaged, active and involved in their own lives and in their communities. In recognition of Older Americans Month, we are dedicating this issue of the *Monthly Bulletin* to hearing loss and aging.

May is also Better Hearing and Speech Month. It is a great time to get your hearing tested, especially if you are age 45 or older. Check out the "FYI" section for information about discounted testing in the month of May.

Finally, I want to recognize three outstanding interns that worked with ODHH this spring. The students, Katherine Anderson, Sarah Peters, and Darrin Smith, contributed so much to the office and will certainly be missed. If you are interested in an internship with ODHH, please contact us for more information.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the ODHH Monthly Bulletin. As always, feel free to contact us for further information about any of the articles below.

-Lisa

In This Issue

Hearing Loss and Aging

Medicare and Hearing Aids

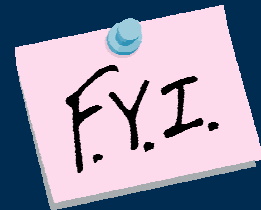
Spotlight On: Maryland Deaf Senior Citizens

Hearing Loss and Aging

According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), hearing loss is the third most prevalent chronic condition in older Americans. It is the number one communicative disorder of the aged; between 25 and 40 percent of the population aged 65 years or older has a hearing loss.

What is Presbycusis?

Presbycusis is the loss of hearing that gradually occurs in most individuals as they grow older. Hearing loss is a common condition associated with aging. The loss associated with presbycusis is usually greater for high-pitched sounds. For example, it may be



May is also Better Hearing and Speech Month

Since 1927, the American Speech- Language- Hearing Association (ASHA) celebrates Better Hearing and Speech Month each May. This annual event provides opportunities to raise awareness about communication disorders and to promote treatment that can improve the quality of life for those who experience problems with speaking, understanding, or hearing.

An annual hearing checkup is a good idea for people age 45 and up, according to audiologists, the professionals who specialize in preventing, identifying, assessing, and treating hearing disorders. Even a very slight hearing loss can have an impact on your daily life. Speech and language disorders can take many forms and can limit academic achievement, social adjustment, and career advancement. For more information, visit ASHA's website.

During the month of May, the Hearing and Speech Agency is offering discounted hearing tests for new patients. Check

difficult for someone to hear the nearby chirping of a bird or the ringing of a telephone. However, the same person may be able to hear clearly the low-pitched sound of a truck rumbling down the street. Presbycusis can occur because of changes in the auditory nerve, inner ear, middle ear, or outer ear.

According to the ASHA website, the prevalence of presbycusis rises with age, ranging from 40% to 60% in patients older than 75 years and more than 80% in patients older than 85 years.

What should you do if you think you may have a hearing loss?

The Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) suggests that you see an ear, nose, and throat doctor (otolaryngologist or otologist) or your primary care physician to see if you have a hearing loss and to rule out any medical condition.

You may also choose to go to an audiologist directly without seeing a doctor. In this case you would need to sign a waiver, because currently the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires that you see a physician first.

Medicare and Hearing Aids



Currently Medicare does not cover hearing aids. There have been several attempts in Congress to address coverage for hearing health services for Medicare recipients.

In some cases, Medicare Part B covers diagnostic hearing and balance exams if your doctor orders these tests to see if you need medical treatment.

Medicare does not cover routine hearing exams, hearing aids, or exams for fitting hearing aids. As a result, you pay 100% cost for routine exams and hearing aids. You pay 20% of the Medicare-approved amount for the doctor's services for covered exams. In a hospital outpatient setting, you pay a copayment.

H.R.2140- Medicare Hearing Health Care Enhancement Act of 2011

Representative Mike Ross (D-AR) has introduced the Medicare Hearing Health Care Enhancement Act of 2011 (H.R. 2140- the Direct Access bill) in the U.S. House of Representatives. This legislation was introduced with 11 original co-sponsors. The bipartisan legislation would allow Medicare beneficiaries the option of going directly to a qualified audiologist for hearing and balance diagnostic tests. Currently, Medicare requires that beneficiaries with hearing loss or balance disorders obtain a physician referral before seeing an audiologist.

Another Resource for Hearing Aids - AARP

AARP members, through the AARP Hearing Care Program, can now receive both quality care and preferred pricing from the HearUSA network of credentialed hearing care providers.

All AARP members will receive reduced costs, uniform pricing and extended warranties on the HearUSA selection of state-of-the-art digital hearing aids and related products, plus personal hearing

out the [HASA website](#) for more information.

Quick Links

[ODHH Website](#)



[Contact Us](#)

[Maryland.gov](#)

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

ODHH on the Move

Innovations in Aging 2012 Conference and Expo

May 3-5

Gaylord National Hotel and Conference Center
National Harbor, MD

DeafNet Association 3rd Annual Deaf Awareness Day

May 11

10 AM - 4 PM

Valley Mall
Hagerstown, MD

ODHH will be hosting a Town Hall Meeting during this event

Maryland Association of the Deaf Symposium

May 18-19

Baltimore Convention Center
Baltimore, MD

ODHH will be hosting a Town Hall Meeting during this event

State Offices will be closed May 25th and May 28th in observance of

rehabilitation services to help patients experience the maximum benefits of the latest in amplification.

Memorial Day

Spotlight On: Maryland Deaf Senior Citizens



On November 3, 1976, at a church in Silver Spring, Maryland, forty-one people voted to create the Senior Citizens Club of the Deaf, which, years later, was renamed the Maryland Deaf Senior Citizens.

For the next 20 years, MDSC moved from one location to another in its search for a room large enough to accommodate its increasing membership. In 1999, the Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center offered MDSC President Rudolph Hines a room in Argyle House, the "house up the hill." MDSC held events at the house every month. These events were so popular that the membership continued to expand. Eventually, MDSC had grown so much to need the largest room in the Center. In February 2004, the first MDSC meeting was held there. Today, about 100-150 members attend a MDSC event every third Thursday of the month at the Center.

Maryland Deaf Senior Citizens, Inc. is an educational and social organization of and for deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind senior citizens. The method of communication during these gatherings is primarily American Sign Language. MDSC is a 501(C)(3) corporation. Donations to MDSC may be claimed for federal income tax purposes to the extent of the law.

A Senior Citizen Event is held on every third Thursday of the month from 10:30 AM to 3:30 PM except for July and August. Events consist of socializing, guest lecturers, and games. MDSC will also be hosting a Maryland Deaf Festival on November 14, 2012 and will be hosting the 12th Biennial Deaf Seniors of America Conference August 22-27, 2013. For more information on MDSC and its activities, visit the [MDSC website](#).

Questions? Comments? Contact:

Julie Anne Schafer, Esq.
Assistant Director
Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
217 E. Redwood Street, Suite 1300
Baltimore, MD 21202
410-767-7793 (voice)
443-453-5954 (VP)
jschafer@gov.state.md.us
<http://www.odhh.maryland.gov/>